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THE
BRITISH TOCSIN;

OR,

PROOFS

OF

NATIONAL RUIN.

LONDON;

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INTRODUCTION.

TO follow Truth is to do every thing that is required; and if there were not some truths, whereof it is necessary that Britons should be informed, this work would never have been presented to the world.

The jargon of courts, and the sophistry of priests, have so often misled the general mind, that it is necessary plain truth and common sense should at last create a revolution in the human heart, and make the recesses of intellect the receptacles of civic virtue. Happily for the world, the period is arrived that neither quotation or precedent bias the writers of the day; modern genius appears emulous of originality, and acts independantly from its own feelings; by this means, the intellectual eye discovers beauties unobserved before, and principles and virtues vegetate into being, nurtured only by the rays of nature,

If, therefore, in this tract, ideas and axioms should be produced novel to the received opini-

ons of men, let them be considered before they are condemned. I write from my heart—and the warmth of feeling may exceed the boundaries of prudence—but as a Man, I have a right to enjoy my native sentiments, and, as a Citizen, it is my duty to communicate them.

To my country then I commit my thoughts, a stranger to those blessings which lull the bosom into apathy, unpossessed of riches, and uncontaminated by the pride which they inspire; possessed of no other heritage, than that which nature has universally bestowed on man, I would wish to converse with my country as with my friend; and with my countrymen reciprocally receive and return the advantages of reflection.

Britain is on the brink of ruin—it is not the vain dreams of politicians, or the idle malevolence of parties that vociferate, or create this idea; it is founded on fact, and the daily contemplation of men corroborates the assertion. Deceitful pictures have been drawn by the dependants upon power of the flourishing state of our country, notwithstanding the effects, unavoidably produced by a continuation of war, but experience is the best reply to their insinuations;—the soldierized mechanic, the starving peasant, and the deserted widow, are living protests against the veracity of their reports.

What

What are the symptoms of national ruin? Corruption and distress, walking hand in hand through the country; and war eternally completing the triumvirate of despotism. In arbitrary governments, the people may be slaves before they are corrupted; but in countries, which once were free, the people must have been corrupted before they were enslaved: corruption is always the companion of misery, and both are in their turns the produce and the cause of war. Kings, corruption, and misery, too often originate from national dissensions, and too often repay the obligation with the false gratitude of loyal suffering, and glorious destruction.

That government is near its end, when having once depended upon the free temper of the people, they endeavour to reign by their own extent of power; it is much easier for the people to serve the king with cheerfulness, than for the king to restrain the people with distrust;—this jealousy is the watchword of tyranny's dissolution, it is the token of disunion between the monarch and the nation, and in the termination of the affair the nation generally acts for itself.

There was a period, when the discontent of a nation was directed against the ministerial puppets of the day; the system was imagined to be good, though the men who conducted it were bad; but

in this day the people believe that system to be erroneous which permits bad men to ruin the country, without possessing the power of punishing the individual, and of remedying the evil. The nation acts upon a larger scale, and it applies the evils complained of to the frailty of the system, rather than of the man. Principle has succeeded to party, and the judgment of the country deprecates the continual struggle between men, whose virtue is deceit, and whose patriotism is ambition. When nations assume the faculty of thinking for themselves, individual interest is swallowed in the accumulating mass of public spirit; and the meanness of party is derided into the glorious urbanity of the citizen.

To these opinions, therefore, founded on experience, and aggravated by disappointment, may be attributed the expected failure of that system, which has hitherto been deemed the glory of the British nation; but the opinions of men work slowly, their progress is imperceptible and tedious, though their success is certain. Other circumstances have accelerated the downfall of the British system, and the abuses of a constitution have been the causes of its ruin.

Perhaps no country in the universe ever presented to the observation of the citizen a more melancholy picture than Britain at this present moment;

ment; but the ruin of countries which pretend to be free, is not visible upon the surface of affairs; it lies buried in the heart of the land, amid the obscure circles of existence, where aristocratical oppression and association smother in secret the honest indignation of the rustic soul. When we look for the misery which is said to exist in England, let us not confine our observations to the rich and powerful, for whom alone the British constitution bears the least principle of liberty; let the research be deeper. Great men, and aristocratic splendour, are vapours which conceal the prevalence of misery; disperse the cloud, and you will find the peasant cheating his appetite with the rudest trash which nature can digest; and the mechanic deploring in secret the insufficiency of his industry to supply the necessities of his being.

Proud of their borrowed luxuries, the rich may libel the patience and resolution of the poor; but the index to national dissolution is the inequality of enjoyment. Starvation will bring those to their senses on whom principle has no effect. The simplest feelings of nature teach men, that luxury is criminal wherever famine is known; and these feelings tempt them to terminate the abuse. In the dissipation of the rich we shall find the instruction of the poor; and where a *Pitt* insults the patient forbearance of a *kingdom*, a patriot shall one day

or other receive the heartfelt gratitude of an emancipated nation.

Individuals may be hushed into silence, rich men may be coaxed by honours, but when the great body of a country feel, no *hush-money* or *honours*, can quiet their murmurs or steal from the heart of a nation, those dictates which nature has engraven on it. Men learn from necessity the blessings of liberty, the sensation of hunger, enquires from whence that hunger originates, and the continuance of toil obliges man to enquire, who reaps the produce of his labour; thus tyranny itself is the herald of freedom's felicity, and by suffering the evils of famine, pride, and toil, the peasant and the slave, are exalted into men.

Wars in a commercial country may be carried on, and supported for a series of time, by the methods of funding, which have been adopted by the ministers of the three last reigns; but this is only a protraction of ruin, and it is an injustice in principle—it protracts our ruin, because one time or other (provided the system is not discontinued) the profits of national industry will not equal the increase of national indolence which this system occasions, for all funding destroys its own purpose, it swallows up those sums of wealth, and terminates that industrious exertion in the individual, which would otherwise be employed in renovating the exhausted

hausted powers of the country. Wherever men have a fund where they may deposit their wealth, and subsist without exertion, they become the partizans of idle tyranny, and the indolent burthens of nature, their country, and themselves. Funding is injustice, because it entails upon posterity the effects of that prodigality and imprudence which they were never guilty of—it is contrary to nature—it obliges the son to pay for the criminality of the father, and man no sooner sees the fair light of day than he becomes the heir of taxation and tyranny, before he can grasp a pen with his unformed limbs, and before his tongue can give utterance to the dictates of infantine innocence and nature. Whatever is unjust, must be ruinous, and the injustice of funding is one of the principal evils, which shakes the British empire to its base.

Thus having briefly and loosely stated what I conceive to be the causes of the apparent decline too flagrantly witnessed in the stability of our constitution, I proceed more largely to expatiate on their effects, and, if possible, to form some calculation of their result. This introduction is more an exposition of the principles, upon which the following sentiments are founded, than a full declaration of the sentiments themselves. I see my country in a perilous situation, and I consider it my duty to point out the causes of that peril, lest in the crisis of the disease, a remedy should be applied
to

to a wrong part, and the guilty not only be released from the vengeance of insulted justice, but also exult in the unmerited sufferings of the virtue which opposed them. The man that erects a directing signal, amid the storms of nations, deserves more praise of his country, than the revolutionist, who following the cruel mandates of necessity, only controuls the thunder of its vengeance.

In an age when curiosity is ever on the pursuit of novelty, political invention should not be neglected; one trait of truth may contribute somewhat to the general mass—amid matter little noticed great principles have often arisen; and wherever virtue inscribes the page of manly discussion, it is the duty of the citizen to peruse it.

CHAPTER I.

On the Extravagance of the present Reign.

A PRODIGAL King is the most criminal being upon earth, for no other criminality can be so extensive in its effect, or so universally felt—it is like a pauper abusing the benevolence that supports him; it is hypocrisy committing a robbery upon charity, and making laws to shelter itself from the accusations of nature.

Ambition and avarice are two qualities, which, however opposite in their nature, generally mingle in the bosom of a king; but his avarice takes from others, that which supplies his own ambition, and the people are the victims of both. A king may be frugal in his household, or orderly in the expenditure of his private income; but if his wars and nonsensical quarrels cost the nation near two hundred millions—where is his frugality, and what can authorize the boasting eulogiums of his reign? Alas, the people (could they speak their sentiments) would say—O, king, view the distresses which you inflict upon the nation that supports you; *your crown is a burthen, and your reign a ruin.*

I speak of kings that have been—such arguments
cannot

cannot apply to the benificent domination of George III.

The true character of a monarch is not known till the day of his death, it is then that men cast a scrutiny upon his actions, and speak the truth of him that is gone, to flatter the pride of his successor. But why should a man *who can do no wrong* be jealous of his character, if this constitutional precept be true, his vices must be virtues, and his tyranny the most perfect freedom. However I may speak of George III. I will speak no more than the truth, this is the season of enquiry, and patriotic curiosity shall examine the virtues and failings of the throne, for if a king *can do no wrong* in his actions, I am certain, I can do no wrong in speaking of them.

Let the courtly caterpillars, who swarm about the sanctorum of royalty, hear for once in their lives an humble individual echo the dictates of truth. Stubborn facts have arisen, which will not bear the illusions of sophistry, and every intellectual quality of man combines to validate the evils, which for the last twenty years, have scourged the inhabitants of Britain.

In the year 1763, when the nation was released from the war it was engaged in, upon his majesty's accession to the crown, and from which period
alone

alone we can draw a just calculation of the blessings or evils of the present reign, the national debt amounted to one hundred and forty-eight millions; and the interest of it was not less than five millions annually: at the present period the national debt amounts to three hundred and thirty-one millions, five hundred thousand pounds; and the interest of it is not less than twelve millions and one eighth: subtract the difference, and we shall find an increase of one hundred and eighty-three millions in the grand debt, and an increase of seven millions in the interest, which is yearly obtained from the profits of our agriculture and commerce. And now, when court parasites spread through the uninformed part of the nation the boast of blessings derived from the present reign, let truth apply this uncontrovertible reply. The present reign has caused an addition to be made of one hundred and eighty-three millions to the national debt; and a subtraction of seven millions from the annual exertions of the starving peasant and the laborious mechanic: the present reign has been a reign of taxation; and the blessings derived from it—defeat, ruin, tyranny, and distress.

Never did a monarch ascend the throne of his father with such fair prospects before him, as **George III.** After a successful war carried on by able ministers, a quorum of imbecile courtiers, favourites of his majesty, concluded an indifferent peace—

peace—however, the nation was prosperous. But from that period to the present, not a year has passed by without some internal dissatisfaction, or external quarrel, from the resignation of Lord Chatham to the persecution of Mr. Wilkes. Through the American war, down to the present unfortunate period, the petitions of the people have been spurned with insolence from the throne; and thrice has the obstinacy of crown influence resisted the universal commands or requisitions of the national will. The shores of the Atlantic have been stained with the cruelties of German pride, and the powers of Europe have continually been vexed into unnecessary wars, by the childish duplicity of the British court; the British people have suffered misery through patience; they will now learn the lessons of justice, and necessity will be their tutor.

To what are we to attribute this immense expenditure of the national wealth, this continual disturbance of the national peace—but to *something* existing *somewhere*, hostile to the temper, situation, and principles of the country—to a power, foreign both in its origin and conduct—to an interest divided *from us* by the ocean, as well as by its practice. Would any Briton make Tippoo Saib his guardian or testator, when a brother Britain would fulfill the office? What difference is there between *Germany* and *India*?—they are both enslaved.

All unnecessary wars are systems of extravagance, invented by kings and ministers, no matter which, to rob the people and enrich themselves. The contest with America was begun by avarice, and carried on by ambition. The system of taxation was so firmly rivetted on Britain, that certain persons imagined they might also extend it across the Atlantic, and open another source of tyrannical swindling, to be poured into the insatiable abyss of the treasury. Happily for mankind, though not for Britain's oppressors, the project failed; and after thousands of our countrymen, and millions of our wealth, had been lavished at the desire of hypocritical dispositions, the King of England concluded a peace with Congress, and the British people paid the expences of a war, in which they had neither interest or will. The defence and quarrels of Havover have also drawn million after million from the pockets of our countrymen; and while we give an extravagant income, and a noble lodging to an Elector of Germany, we are obliged to repair and support the crazy castle he has left, containing nothing but worm-eaten records of chivalry and honours, that are prudently smothered in dust, to conceal the enormities which acquired them.

If the British court had tried an experiment to shew the despots of Europe how far the patience of the people might be abused, they could not have followed

followed a more regular plan of flagrant violence, and abusive innovation. There is not a right in the British constitution which has not been attacked, nor a charter of the kingdom which has not been invaded; but rights and charters are not such material concerns with the generality of unenlightened men, as those monied affairs, with which the wealth and prosperity of the individual are more intimately connected. Men absented from the Temple of Liberty necessarily resort to that of Plutus for a shelter. In this case, the present reign has sufficiently harrassed this country. The last twenty years have been nothing but a continuation of loans and funding. The government's appetite has risen in a duplicate proportion to national industry, and the drained purses of the country will testify the fact.

Notwithstanding the addition of 100,000*l.* per annum, to the Civil List, and the immediate supply of 618,340*l.* in the year 1776, the demands upon this account have not decreased. A man, who in the country of his ancestors could scarce supply the ragged centinels at his gate with half a loaf of straw bread per day, must, in a land of strangers and benefactors, continually beg grant after grant, make mendicantism the order of the crown, and, like the common strollers of the street, make a long tale of a large and increasing family, and obtain from national pity that relief which should

should have subsisted and comforted the national poor.

But beggary is not confined merely to the throne; it extends through the lower branches of what is termed the Royal Family; and *bestow your charity* echoes from all corners and parts of this Germanic junto. Debts have been accumulated upon debts—merely to try how far the British parliament would make itself subservient to the British Court. Men in and out of parliament have formed a pretended party round the Prince, for the purpose of encouraging and partaking his prodigality. The profligacy of the younger part of the court is an admirable instance of the absolute domination of the Monarchy, for if the people were not destined to pay—the prince would never be so eager to spend, it is the certainty of a paymaster to the piper, that alone induces him to chaunt the requiem of virtue and liberty. I have known instances of Negro Princes who have been whipped by their subjects for negligence or extravagance; and why the British Nation does not erect the scourge of censure and criminality over the posteriors of an offending debauchee, I can assign no reason whatever, when a prince whines and cries to have his wild impudence supplied by the mother-like bounty of a nation, he deserves the rod of correction, and the treatment of a child.*

B

Pretended

* The letter to the Prince, which has received so much undeserved

Pretended debts, and pretended wants are jokes too often repeated to continue the idea of their necessity; we may augur that the last payment is made, and the last party gratified, that will ever congregate around the purlieus of Pall-Mall. A pauvre match from Germany has not been cloak enough for the shameful demand made upon the nation; the rapacity of the cheat, has ruined the trade of the swindler: the last deception has ripped up the golden goose, and the political Ideots have destroyed the source of continued fleecing, and blameable credulity. A finis will shortly be placed upon royal extravagance! and their own avarice will furnish the oblivion of their knavery.

A cursory view of the supplies voted in different years, might shew the people, the increasing burthens laid upon them, and the advance which has taken place in that revenue, which has always occasioned a jealousy between the friends of the British Constitution, and the adherents to the throne; however three statements taken in three periods of war, with a comparative view of the Land and Sea Forces, voted (I will not say employed), may serve for the present, as an example of the extravagance of the present reign, whether occasioned by an un-

undeserved notice, is only a continuation of the Juggle; it abuses a fool, to idolize a ministerial rogue—and it is a second edition of profligacy—where sophistry pays the demands of impudence.

necessary

necessary system of warfare, externally, or by the internal avarice and delusion of the governing powers.

		No. Seamen.	No. Landm.	Supply.	s.
In Geo. 2d.	A. D. 1757,	55,000	49,749	8,350,325	9
Geo. 3d.	— 1763,	30,000	56,360	13,522,039	14
Ditto,	— 1780,	85,000	35,000	21,196,496	12

Thus, from 1757 to 1780, a period of twenty-three years only, the yearly burthens of the nation have increased from eight to twenty-one millions, though the number of Land and Sea forces upon an average are nearly the same; an alarming increase has also taken place since the year 1780, notwithstanding Mr. Pitt's plan for paying off the national Debt. In the last budget, when 100,000 Seamen were voted for the service of the year, and when foreign subsidies, and foreign troops alike feasted at the expence of Britain, the supplies amounted to £27,440,584. I can remember, in the reign of George II. that the whole supplies of the year were not exceeding two millions and an half, and yet in the reign of George III. twenty-eight millions are scarcely sufficient to supply the necessities of ambition for the space of twelve months. Whether this increase is occasioned by wars or not, the imputation is equally the same; all wars are carried on and begun by the crown, and the crown is therefore the cause of those miseries which at this moment depress the energy of Bri-

tons, and generate discontent and ruin through the land.

These are facts that apply alike to the patriot, and the monied alarmist; they are documents afforded us by government itself, and out of its own mouth it is accused. When nations murmur at oppression, it is the practice of oppressors to sophisticate; they throw upon society the evils which originate from governments, and denounce the order of life, because, through their tyranny, man is almost weary of living. Ye courtly torturers of reality and principle, your sway is nearly terminated. Whenever statesmen fly to sophistry, it is a proof that their actions are base, but the obscurity of your defence, betrays the criminality of your deeds, the priest and the pensioner may twine round and round the subject as they please; reason proceeds in the strait parallel of principle, and calculates at once the true mensuration of man's felicity.

CHAPTER II.

On the effects which the Extravagance of the present Reign has produced upon the people of England.

THE world in general derives its knowledge from the circumstances which it feels; tyrannical extravagance is therefore its own enemy, because it teaches mankind the necessity of being freed from it, and of instituting something less expensive to the community.

When we describe evils, we should also calculate their effect; a work is but half compleated which does not improve from the failings of another. Through the extravagance of the last thirty years, a new mode of thinking has been adopted, and a revolution has taken place in the fashions of the mind. The British nation, once the adorer of prejudice, now invents queries with respect to the necessity of such and such institutions, and pries into their uses, and abuses, with an inquisitorial nicety. The Ministerial expenditure of national credulity, has caused the intellectual appetite to rise in a due proportion. The vast mass of confidence, which once bore Ministers through all their machinations, is at length wearied out, its powers and strength are exhausted, and nothing remains

but the pulse of national repentance, feebly throbbing to the touch of Liberty.

Through the several administrations which have usurped the direction of affairs, during the present reign, we find one continued system of juggling prevalent; principle was the study of none, and the art of getting rich at the expence of the people, the practice of all: if the schemes of state gamblers could ever have insured them the universal detestation of mankind, I am sure that a Bute! a Grafton! a North! a coalition ministry, or a crown minister of this day, will not want the artist's will, to engrave the Characters of obliquy upon their tombs; enough if, we are but convinced that they are gone, a nation shall dance their quietus to the sounds of Freedom; a nation has received instructions from their practices, and a nation shall receive the convictions of principle, from the effects of their corruption. A better exposition of tyranny could never have been given to us, than that which these tyrants themselves have handed to us; the Philosopher, in a remote corner, fearful of detection, and shrinking from the grasp of power, could never have informed the public so universally, as a North in conjunction with a Fox, shaking hands together, and burying the remembrance of dissenting principles, in the unprincipled convenience of party, as a Pitt, amid the legal authorities of his country, abjuring the virtuous principles of his youth,

youth, and making ministerial necessity the triumphant conqueror of his memory.

The present generation does not, like the generation which preceded it, depend on men, it applies to principles, and makes the heart its patriot. There was a period when a grand title, or an acquired name, were certain recommendations to popular favour, but when these are united to inconsistency, the public take away the false colours, which cast a glossy appearance upon the reptile, and shew the Chamelion in his native hue. This is one glorious effect of ministerial or royal extravagance (for they are equally the same), this is one index by which the nation discovers the individual intention and interest, from the vast volume of loyal pretence and hypocrisy, and quotes the action itself, to prove the venality of the man.

In as much as feeling is superior to theory, in as much will the experience of the British nation, successfully bear witness against the sophistry of statesmen and priests. The excess of this reign's *extravagance* has produced a universal famine, both in the subsistence, and the felicity of society. And while the minister vociferates his own applause, and boasts the advantages of his domination, the dumb dejection of the national spirit, the silent sufferings of patient ignorance effectually answers his assertions, and contradicts his words. While

the gentleman deputed to his country seat, with a whole budget of sophistry at his back, harangues the gaping farmer, upon the blessings of the Constitution; the dearness of provisions, and the unrewarded continuance of labour, oppose the nonsense only collected from the treasury hirelings of the town. While the priest, from his sacred rostrum, mumbles out the inspired dictates of five hundred pounds *per annum*; recommends peace and order, and talks about *giving to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*? Hodge finding the tax-gatherer conveying away the produce of his labour, imagines their peace and order, to be rather expensive, and finds, by perusing the public debates, that the Cæsars of our country, by right of law, have nothing of their own, save what they beg from the charitable sanhedrim of Westminster. The nation, in a collective body, hearing the virtues of Kings- and Princes bandied to and fro, like shuttlecocks, to keep the people gazing in the air, turn to the grand archives of profit and loss, of principle and tyranny, and find benevolence blotted out by hypocrisy and royalty, and war expunging the characters of Liberty and life. Alas, too often the conviction of sorrow, and suffering depresses the natural energy of man: would that the sight of oppression could always inspire the resolution of justice, then popular execration would be turned to universal triumph; and we should not have to weep the ravages of tyrants,

rants, the jocund concord of emancipated nature, would urge us to dance upon their tombs.

We need not refer to a distant period in the page of modern history, nay, from the annals of the present reign we may discover the excess of flattery bestowed upon the merit of nothing. It was once imagined one of the greatest blessings this country ever enjoyed, that the Brunswick family had succeeded to the throne; but experience has taught us another lesson, and the dear bought felicity of such an attainment, has palled or disgusted the public appetite. John Bull will go to see a puppet-show, but John Bull must first enjoy his pot of porter; whenever his industry will scarce supply him with the latter, the show attracts no longer, and the show-man will be ruined. Necessity always conquers folly. Kings and Courts, in fact, are no more than puppet-shows, a species of Royal wax-work, stuck up to attract popular attention, while the ministerial emissaries of the grand jugglers pick the pockets of the infatuated world.

Court flattery then, which was once the order of the day, is not at this period admitted, even to the honours of the sitting. The British nation no longer considers that accession as a blessing, which has cost them so much. Adulation has had its day; truth has been introduced by necessity, and the feelings of Englishmen have taught them principles, which their credulous habits, would not permit them

them to imbibe before. The man of principle and virtue has been converted by the rapidity of reason; the man of money and convenience has been converted by the depreciation of his property.

But the extravagance of the present reign, has been productive of consequences, which, for the present are pernicious in the extreme; it has corrupted our national integrity, when we contemplate the numerous crouds of dependants and hirelings, which continually haunt the orgies of the Great; their servility, their deceit, their deficiency of every manly virtue; we cannot but lament that oppression, which has deprived them of the honest means of living; we cannot but deplore the prevalence of that temptation, which has rendered them aliens from the dignity of life. The minister bribes the courtier; the courtier convenes around him a dependant band of menials, place expectants, desperadoes, and tradesmen; these in their turn are the corrupted leaders of other circles, and thus the rammifications of corruption extend, and thus the genuine spirit of the nation is destroyed. These are your spies and informers, a race of men, who too indolent for useful industry, rack themselves from morning till night (to please their patrons, or entrap their fellow-creatures) in a more laborious manner than they could possibly endure, though they swept the streets for a respectable subsistence. Ye candid highwaymen, how superior are you in character to the wretch, who on the high road of
life,

life, commands virtue to stop in the midst of her journey, and robs society of its confidence and principle.

This is one of the effects of the present reign; it is a system which has originated during the last twenty years, and at this moment pervades the whole island; interest is made the guide of human conduct; and the question is not now, are you qualified for such employment or place, but what is your interest, and with whom are you connected? Every circumstance in this reign has tended by imperceptible means, to make the people dependent upon the persons above them; and financial extravagance has been the engine of tyrannical malevolence. A chain of influence has extended throughout the country, and it is the determined arm of popular resentment alone that can break it.

If these evils are produced by the extravagance of the present reign, that extravagance will one day or other be the cause of national ruin. We cannot support the present excess of taxation, the British people have not resources sufficient to bear oppression, which only grows heavier by duration; and profligacy, which encreases in a due ratio with our patience. Whenever the government is not believed, the government will be despised, wherever government lacks the coincidence of the people, its prosperity is at an end. Britain has suffered from century to century, through the delusion of
its

its governors. The awakened attention of the country now looks forward to other agents for better times.

If there is an effect of this extravagance yet unmentioned, it is one which patriotic prudence must yet conceal in secrecy; let the heart think for itself; ruin is often times the medium of liberty; tyrants possess no where such an inveterate enemy, as their own misconduct. When a possessor of an estate squanders it heedlessly among the dissolute, it generally happens, that the legal heirs obtain it from the grasp of the abandoned, and the property devolves on persons, who will improve and enjoy it, for the advantage of themselves and the world. When princes gamble with the gifts of their people, the people should snatch the national property from the power of the gamester, and not permit the *black legs of royalty*, to stake the felicity of man against their unprofitable ambition. If ever a King should so far forget the bounty of the people, who placed him on his throne, as to make their credulity the means of his extravagance, and their industry the supply of his obstinacy and ambition, that King wherever he may exist or reign, will one day or other find public justice succeed public forbearance, and the sanctity of the throne will be no barrier to the vengeance of an insulted nation. Happy for the sceptered individual, if pity for the man should supersede the anger created by the evils of his situation.

CHAPTER III.

Some Explanation of the wretched state to which the imprudent forbearance of the People, and the Extravagance of Ministers, has reduced the British Nation.

A COMMERCIAL bankruptcy! a national famine! and an unavoidable Revolution! are the effects which originate from Ministerial profligacy and error!—let us consider them.

Politicians in general proceed upon wrong calculations, with respect to commercial prosperity—emulous of exceeding each other in the art of national eulogium, they are led away by the appearance, rather than guided by the reality of success; and they imagine that the quantity of export and import constitutes a secure increase of our traffic, without reflecting, whether that quantity is productive of real benefit; and formed on a secure basis. A nation may become the carriers of Europe, but if the people derive no benefit from that universal intercourse—it is only a swelling catalogue of unprofitable labour, and ruin and industry go hand in hand.

If England were well governed, it would be the market of the world. I do not say, that the increase

crease of commerce is the cause of its failure—no—but whenever commerce is ruinously conducted, then in proportion as the system is enlarged, the destruction must also increase. When the merchant finds upon impartial reflection, that one half his profits go to supply the exigencies of what is termed government, he will then find the reason, why cargo after cargo is unladen, and yet why so small a portion of its benefits accrue to the individual that imported it. In Britain, numerous articles of the first consequence—can be exported again, at a much greater profit, than if they were retained in the country; this deprives the nation of the advantages of its own commerce, and the British sailors labour for the convenience of foreigners. The high duties, imposts and customs, make Britain only a sieve, where every thing that is valuable passes through, and leaves nothing behind but the refuse and chaff. Spain imagined by like means to make herself rich, by the possession of South America, but Spain was only the medium by which the remainder of Europe obtained the fruits of her exertions; the parallel is apposite—Britain undertakes to explore every corner of the ocean, and yet through customs, duties, and imposts, other nations open their ports, and receive the advantages of her universal traffic. Goods and commodities are received into our warehouses, and re-shipped to foreign parts; the real industry of commerce just dawns upon this boasted mart of Europe, and scared
by

by its exactions, fails to a land, more willing to reward its labours.

The landed property of a nation cannot be productive of much revenue, because it produces little more than is necessary for the immediate sustenance of man; it is commerce, that supports the exorbitant income of the British Government. The people are slaves, who labour and toil for a certain pittance of existence, while government exact the fruits of their industry. Commerce, under the present system of affairs, is no more than a system of hulks, where the convicts of tyranny weary out their lives and receive no benefit from their exertions; it is no difference to the individual whether an excise duty, or a farmer-general robs him of his property. In commercial affairs—duties, customs, and exactions are national piracies, upon the universal privilege of trade.

In superficially surveying the British traffic, we may be led to admire its extent, but in this day, all capitals are nominal, they are dependent upon credit, and the national commerce stands upon a basis, as flimsy as the paper which supplies the want of a sterling medium. A merchant runs upon trust for all his concerns, and scarce a man that struts upon the Exchange, but depends upon a quick return, for the safety of his credit, and the repayment of the property he has borrowed. The
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solid stability of the British merchant is no more. Credit is the foundation of that trade, which should be founded on its own security; and national misery will ruin that commerce, which expands like a bubble—to burst into nothing.

Because government by duties, and customs, reaps the solid advantages of commerce, the merchant is obliged to carry it on, upon a system of credit; that profit which would enable him to obtain a real capital and traffic independently, being seized by the ruling powers: he is obliged to recur to unstable measures, and to introduce into the fair ledger of trade, a long account of credit and interest. Whenever by a national revolution that credit is destroyed, the whole system is dis-jointed, and prosperity is flown. There may be a number of vessels and seaman, but the first, unless the merchant be respectably supported, will rot useless burthens upon our shores, and the latter become the victims of want, and the solicitors of public charity.

Commerce should be as free as the ocean on which it travels; all restraints introduce ruin, and all duties, customs, and excises, are nothing more than tyranny passing a veto upon the prosperity of trade. Kings can place no turn-pikes on the sea, they therefore erect their imposts in our national ports, and make us pay that at home, which they
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could never exact upon the wide bosom of the main. Britain has spent as much to terminate smuggling as she has gained by her multitude of customs and excise-laws; the remedy was worse than the disease, and it is well if the nation is not ruined by the experiment.

But the nation is reduced to a situation, which far excels the most animated writer to describe. Famine is an evil which our governors must immediately remedy—hunger is not a grievance which the contempt of tyrants may adjourn from day to day, the necessaries of life must be obtained, or man will be unable to bear with the oppression, which his indolence would otherwise neglect to notice.

This dreadful misery is to be derived alone from the wickedness of the present ministry; it is an evil which can alone be caused by an exportation of our national produce, and a deficiency in the returns of commerce—perhaps the Chouans and the rebels of Vendee are a species of beings, more valuable than the people of Britain. The despicable emigrants are to be supplied before the English peasant, and foreign blood-hunters are to receive the natural support of our own poor—admirable judgment of Pitt!—noble speculations of royalism! Ye teach the treachery of courts, and convert the starving victims of slavery to the cheerful hopes of liberty.

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But this is a famine likely to continue and increase, unless national vengeance burst at once, and make tyranny its food. Throughout Europe the same scarcity extends; and unless the soldier be returned to his cottage and plough, the earth will remain uncultivated, and man unused. Circumstances are come to a crisis—kings must either disband their armies, or else the famine, which those armies produce, will prove the compressing signal of universal revolution; and the instruments of despotism becoming its victims, will turn indignant on their masters, and make necessity the plea of their rebellion.

Three millions of active men deducted from the agricultural labour of Europe, and collected together in large and idle bodies, have in some measure caused the universal scarcity. Poland divided and dividing, desolated and ravaged, now requires that assistance from other nations which she once distributed as the granary of Europe. It is not likely that kings will disband their armies—it is not likely that Russia and Prussia will resign their booty; and yet these being the causes of famine, will continue and increase the evil, till starvation operates as an universal restorative, and nature herself, neglected and oppressed, sounds the Tocfin of Revolution and Revenge.

In Britain, the monarch will not disband his
fencibles

scencibles and affociations, they must remain as guardians of property, till property and plenty are consumed by the very means intended to preserve them. This war of *justice and necessity* will not be discontinued, till *justice* becomes renewed, and *necessity* occasions the renovation. The government, the rich, and the luxurious, may in vain study their imbecile projects of supply—nature, robbed of the peasants, who cultivate her increase, will not attend to the echoes of tavern resolutions; and man, robbed of his sustenance, cannot but follow the resentful dictates of his heart.

The expences of the British government have deprived the merchant of that solid dependance which alone can secure the prosperity of commerce. The imprudence of the British government has occasioned that scarcity of necessaries which alone can rouse the mass of man to resentful action; and both these evils cause that revolutionary temper in the kingdom, which alone can originate from the oppressive conduct of the governors. Man loves rest, and he can never be spurred into action, save when his necessities oblige him. But at this period fluggish inanity is at an end—hunger and ruin are the agitators of the day—and the barrenness of nature aggravates the storm.

The exorbitant taxes of the country first lapped

the respectable basis of commerce—the war has occasioned a dearth of provisions; these will soon compleat the work of ruin, and the necessity of a revolution becomes every day more and more conspicuous. Revolutionary principles can never be prevalent but from a conviction that they are necessary; and thus we always form a judgment of the situation of a country, by the impartial excess of popular opinion. Men reason from their feelings, and speak from what they see. The mechanic feels that it is requisite to claim an advance upon his labour, because his weekly wages will not supply his weekly wants. And a nation is convinced that a change of government is necessary, because a continuation of its evils can only increase the miseries at present complained of. National opinion is the representative of national situations; and principles only legislate what the existing circumstances direct. When men revile the idea of theoretical opinions, let them remember, that all theory is the production of feeling, and that feeling is the experience of existing objects. Whenever the man of pounds, shillings, and pence, regards all opinion as visionary, let him reflect, that those opinions were first generated by the scarcity of money or provisions, and that bodily feeling first stamp'd the sensation upon the mind.

It were well if some mediated course of reform could preclude the violence of a revolution; but
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to such a desirable event the obstinacy of our governors is an insurmountable obstacle. The nation is reduced to the desperate necessity of chusing one of two extremes, no mild medium will be allowed by ministerial influence. But the event is near at hand, every moment teems with new corroborations of the fact. And in proportion as time proceeds, the expected day of national retribution approaches. To that day and circumstance we look forward with hesitating hope ! The consequence of the struggle appals the boldest conjecture ; and the uncertainty of the prospect dims the penetration of the politician. However the certainty of its arrival moves the heart with trembling rapture, and the national wish throbs forward to the conflict, unanimously resolved to conquer, or to die,

CHAPTER IV.

On the Means of recovering National Liberty and Prosperity—with Reflections on the pusillanimous Conduct of passive Citizens.

HAVING stated the extravagance of the present reign, discussed its effects, and described the state of our country, let us consider the means of obtaining redress and freedom.

But first let me address those idle members of society, who playing truant from the active duties of life, will yet doubt whether there exist any grievance at all, will still enquire—What are the evils you complain of, and what can you require?

The evils we complain of are, *ruin, famine, and war*—and our requisitions are, *reform! liberty, and peace*. Have you, indolent partakers of the luxuries of wealth, experienced or seen the miseries of poverty? When you applaud and approve *war, taxation and corruption*, have you lost a parent, a brother, or a friend, by the assassinating sword of national contest? have you seen the tax-gatherer enter your house, like a ruffian, and rob you of the little property your industry acquired?—have you been wrested from your family and relatives, to starve in a prison, for
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letting the dictates of your hearts slip from your lips?—if you have seen these miseries, and yet can feel no emotions struggle in your breast, you have a heart only fit to study the polluted annals of a court: if you live in Britain, and have not seen them, you have made your virtues the captives of your indolence, and committed suicide upon the delegated intellect of life.

Wherever tyranny occasions sorrow, it is the duty of the world to sympathize. However luxurious and easy your situation, it is the peasant that makes it so: nature never made him your inferior, it is only the convenience of society that makes him submit; and when that convenience is no more, his submission will likewise terminate, and the moment of his independence is the finis of your gentility. Convinced that ruin will be the production of the present measures, will you prolong those measures, and join partners with destruction? or will you, at least, acknowledging that such miseries do exist, decline the ungenerous practice of insulting and opposing the oppressed. In this age man registers his feelings, and the long list of his injuries will one day or other be laid on the altar of justice. When a *royal junto* are scattered abroad upon the earth they pester, and when a *crowned cormorant* goes feasting to the scaffold, you can feel their sorrows, you can pity their decrease and exile—and shall you not be roused into

manly vengeance, when thousands fall beneath the sword of unnecessary war, and when virtue and happiness are banished from the grand society of man.

Wealth may instil into man that lethargy which unnerves the resolution of the mind; a possession of property may render the idea of losing it terrible, and for that reason, one half the British nation are content to resign one half of their possessions to preserve the rest: but it is not the intention of reformers in the least to invade private property; it is their wish to make property the real and sacred possession of the individual, and not to be drained through legal robberies, for the unnecessary demands of a corrupt and useless government. Chuse, ye monied alarmists, whether you would have your wealth the sacred deposit of an individual, sacred to his own use, and the blessings of private society, or whether ye would still drain your purses, and forfeit half your income, to support the lingering evils of despotism, and prolong the expiring dotage of tyranny.

Perhaps, emulous to preserve that haughty superiority over the residue of man, which corrupt governments always attach to wealth, you may shudder at the idea of deriving no political advantage from its possession; but necessity, if not principle, will oblige you to mingle with all men as your brethren. The will of the majority *shatters*
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and the egg-shell fabric of aristocracy into nothing, and
 the man, selecting himself as a chosen one of society,
 will be obligated to partake of the universal soci-
 ality of the world, and become a citizen of life.
 I know not what feelings aristocrats may possess,
 but, to me, nothing is so delightful as the conge-
 nial participation of all sentiment and degree, to
 behold my fellow beings speak to me as a man, not
 as a slave, and to enjoy, at nature's table, the deli-
 cious banquet of free intercourse and unbiassed
 thought. I know of no one so miserable as the
 man whom pride and privilege shut out from the
 society of man; he erects for himself a dungeon,
 and through the bars of his own prejudice sighs for
 the common felicity of life.

I have explained the causes of ruin and scarcity,
 and their effects, let us at last turn our thoughts to-
 wards the emancipation of Britain, and the means
 by which we may effect it.

When governments verge towards their decline
 it is the duty of man to renew them; and the men
 who prosecute reformers, represent, to my imagi-
 nation, an old miser, who having amassed riches
 through an old building, snarls at every one who
 would repair his mansion, or describe to him the
 rotten walls just tottering into ruin. But when
 governors are deaf, we should speak to the people.
 The British nation can alone be the medium of
 reno-

renovation, and the origin of reform; for *ministers and minister-makers* have so often juggled us with hypocritical delusion, that it is our duty as men, to do justice to the unsullied character of the nation, and turn the sneer of malevolence into the terror of guilt, receiving from the people the desert of its crimes.

It is a plain fact, that the British people can depend on no one but themselves. Patriots are too unstable a species of things to trust reform with, let the grand body of the nation act for itself; the administration of the affairs of freedom should never be delegated to any individual: it is the general concern of the country, and the country is always adequate to judge of its own interests; let Britons but follow the unbiaſſed tendency of their own feelings, and the sense of the country will be reciprocally the same.

By association our interests are discovered, and our intentions made known; by association, the general body of the people know each others tempers and wishes, and the national will is collected and defined; by association corruption and tyranny are discovered, discussed, and defeated. All political societies are friendly to liberty, because liberty always triumphs in the assembled discussions of men, and it is to political society alone, that we shall ever direct our attention for an effectual remedy

medy to the evils we complain of; in popular assemblies, the ministers of the day will find their greatest enemy start forth, namely, Truth—the collision of argument, clears away the aristocratical filth which may have gathered on the mind, and the heart of man partaking the feelings of others, is warmed into energy, and acquires a sensation adapted to all the dictates of patriotism.

Popular societies alone can organize public feeling, and make the prosperity of reform secure, they give a body and a force to the national will, and conduct the wishes of the people in their proper channel; it is by such affiliations alone, that we can ever make virtue and liberty the standard of our government; and it is as much the duty of the citizen to engage in such societies as it is to bear liberty in his heart, for these are the academies, where principle, virtue, and nature act as tutors, and make life's felicity the intent of their tuition.

Were fifty thousand men engaged in one society, their resolution could effect any thing—it would be a phalanx superior to all the efforts of corruption. This is the only method by which the national wish can be collected and delivered to the government. While the country preserves its peace and patience, this is the only progressive path which presents itself to our view. There are societies, but they are yet in their infancy, their principles are undigested, and
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their intentions disjointed by the confusion occasioned by a multiplicity of unnecessary regulations ; when these men conduct themselves on a plain and simple plan, their efforts will be successful—the basis of an universal political association is already founded, and it only requires the prudence of the patriot to carry the intended structure into effect. But when the repeated solicitations of an oppressed people are of no avail—let us enquire what conduct such societies should pursue.

Whenever a government acts contrary to the wishes of a people, the people should first strip it of the powers they have entrusted it with, and then turn it out of office with contempt ; but it too often happens that the power which that government may enjoy, pretends to act independently of the people, and refuses to obey their commands—armies are the weapons of monarchs, we should make them the shields of the people—whenever a king, holding his authority by certain restrictions, violates those restrictions, the army belongs to him no longer, and every soldier is absolved from his oath. Oaths are in themselves absurdities, for nothing can be so ridiculous as to engage to support a man through all his life, whether he act consistently with his duties or not.

When the last dreadful exigence obliges the nation to assume an active posture, let ministers apply

ply the evil to their conduct, they will have called the people to arms, and rung the tocsin of rebellion through the land. But lest the army should be tempted to act in a hostile manner to peaceable societies, let the means of knowledge, and the benefit of reform, be also extended to the military. It is the pleasure of tyrants to separate the soldier from his countrymen, and it has been the error of the people, to treat the soldier with contempt and violence—let these systems of ruinous aggravation be known no longer—let us associate with our brethren in arms—and the universal impulse of truth will unite the soldier, the peasant, the mechanic, and the gentleman, in one patriotic policy, and congregate all orders and descriptions into a civic mass of indivisible reform.

To restore national liberty, and revive the wonted prosperity of our country, we should associate in popular societies, and endeavour to instil knowledge and virtue in the ignorant, but more particularly among the military, these being the men, on whose credulity and delusion, the partisans of corruption principally depend. These are the most effectual means of introducing reform and liberty—and it is the duty of every patriot to impart that to another, which nature has first imparted to him; the distribution of knowledge is the first duty of man, it is an obligation coeval with our birth, for we have received from others that which others should receive

ceive from us; it is an exchange descending through all generations, of which nature is the original author. Let us consult the grand mind of the universe, and say, is it not better that one particle of that general intellect should improve another, that tyranny may play truant from the regions of life, and distress become a stranger, forgotten in the universal republic of man.

THE CONCLUSION.

AFTER a statement of the causes of our present distress and calamity, after a description of their effects, and a view of the only means by which we can recover liberty and prosperity, I shall close the work by a short description of the state of the world in general.

The first power in Europe will always be France as long as she can preserve the extent of her dominions, situated like a square in the very centre of civilization, she has given an example which her neighbours cannot but imitate—Flanders and Holland are already revolutionized—Britain is on the crisis either of despotism or liberty—the aristocracy of Switzerland tremble for their safety—the petty princes of Germany are already on the trip, and Spain is at this moment engaged with Frenchmen only to learn the principles of nature, and the value of being free. The European world has been electrified by the universal fluid of nature's liberty—and it starts, as yet unconscious of the power that shakes it. The tocsin has once been sounded to the world, and man universally enquires the cause of the alarm.

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But Liberty has much to perform. Austria, Prussia, and Russia, the three leading powers in Europe, are yet involved in the most slavish ignorance, and are three centuries behind the rest of Europe in knowledge and civilization. Sweden and Denmark, through their commerce, are somewhat more enlightened; Poland is obsolete, and only affords us a melancholy instance, that when freedom approaches the borders of despotism, it is made a pretext for despots to seize upon its territories, and extend their systems of slavery—in short, Europe at this moment presents a motley multitude of character and principles, in the disconnection of which liberty can alone hope for success.

But when man begins to think, it is impossible to calculate the progress of his powers, from the cold course of unenlightened ages; when a man is released from a burthen, you may know the exact proportion of his person, but when he is depressed by slavish toil and labour, your picture will be as deformed and odious as the figure from which you have taken it. We cannot pretend to say what man will be, from what he is—he universally assumes a new complexion, and stands upon a novel basis—the tenor of his character is altering every day—he wonders himself at the changes he beholds—and rises from his slavery into thought and freedom, with as much admiration and pleasure, as if

the blind, were at once to discern nature in its mid-day radiance, and life in its meridian of joy.

To thee, Liberty, has this age dedicated its labours—America has acknowledged thee to be her patron; Europe is now ringing with thy conquests; Africa receiving thy lessons from her captured sons, shall follow them, and the slave of European luxury shall become the herald of African emancipation. In Asia, an oppressed prince, and a tortured people, shall one day or other exterminate a horde of lawless usurpers, and the world universally becoming thy children, shall return thee, the best homage of their gratitude, industry and peace.

Perhaps this picture may disgust the old politician—but it is not an unlikely one. Britain at this moment seizes on American property, and the contest which this violation of treaties may provoke, will in all probability unite to the congress both Canada and the West Indies; the emancipated slaves, will, doubtless, some of them return to their country, and spread among those hordes of wandering Africans, the first rude principles of freedom; and in Asia, the miseries which the natives suffer under a certain European power, will, combined with the assistance of France, produce the destruction of the one, and the introduction of the principles practised by the other. In Europe, the scenes lately exhibited, prove beyond doubt, the progress of ameliorating freedom; and even the distant throne of the imperious Catherine may be sub-

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verted before another century shall have passed by in lingering forbearance. It is not to this or that man, country or degree, that the present scene of wonders are confined—a grand conspiracy is generated through the whole fabric of society, every country has its peculiar mode of executing the universal plan, their means may differ, but their principles and effects are one and the same.

Britain, amid the convulsion of empires, may rise triumphant, and be prosperous, though the world beside may be an universal scene of war and misery, provided, that severed from foreign interests, she possesses liberty herself, and allows the liberty of others—but if the present scene is continued, if Hanover is still to be the bone of contention, if corruption is still to supply that contention with taxes wrested from the industrious and the poor—then our commerce and our agriculture only prove that the avarice of our government may increase, and the situation of the people remain eternally the same. Let the ardour of the nation for one moment be exerted with resolution, let Britons resume the characters of their ancestry, if they know nothing of new principles, even the spirit of a Cromwell would be preferable to modern pusillanimity, and it would be better to have one protector, than five hundred corrupted associates, who oppress by law, and make our constitution the medium of their corruption.

APPENDIX.

THIS Work has not appeared so soon as was expected, through a pressure of circumstances, though the contents are not only applicable to the present moment, but the events which have arisen on the page of time, have corroborated every assertion contained in the foregoing sheets. The prophecy of ruin has been fulfilled—the misery foretold has advanced with more rapid strides than even the warmest imagination could predict—and revolution has acquired a celebrity, unequalled in the annals of the world.

The increase of oppression is always the invitation of liberty; it is a political defiance which calls the parties sooner to the combat. America was deprived of her property before she was roused to assert her independence. The parliaments of Paris and Brittany were arrested and suspended from their functions before the constituent assembly assumed a power effectually its own. And may we not augur with propriety, that the deprivation of the last of our liberties in this country will produce the same effect. Yes—yes, the British ministry have sheltered

tered themselves beneath a Convention Bill, because they saw the dangers surrounding them, and their retreat is the signal of an approaching storm.

As an individual, I am not alarmed at their present proceedings, because any man used to search one degree farther than the rest, will discern in the very womb of these times, the glorious birth-day of Triumphant Liberty. To struggle violently against an evil, is to acknowledge its existing power; and the patriots of Britain cannot have a better proof of their force, than the eager temerity with which the tyrants of this country proceed to practise their last measure against the last of our rights; but the struggle will be violent: the patient murmurs of the people are like the growling of a bear, which only retires to recoil. Let ministers beware—when the social participation of opinion is impeded, the dagger of the assassin too often usurps the office of reason, and the arm dictates what the heart is forbid to utter. You may as well presume to curb the vital stream of life that rushes in the veins, as to impede the free exercise of expression, which in fact is the circulating spirit of human felicity—and the only blessing that feeds and saturates the heart of life.

What do I see around me? and in what country do I live? Where is my social friend? and
where

where the genuine sentiments that issued from his heart? I see the fearful shrug, the silent gesture, and all the dreadful silence which figures forth a slave unable to enjoy his being: yet I can also perceive a wishful confidence, that *something will be done*; and in the utmost paroxysm of terror, his looks speak vengeance, and his eye beams liberty. Detested monsters! inhuman parricides of nature's faculties! The very means of tyranny are its downfall! for you have driven us from the temples of Reason and Justice—it is your fault if we open the gates of Janus, and sound the war-hoop of retribution.

No government will undertake a rash measure, provided safer means would ensure a similar success. The Convention Bill is a proof that the government have reason, justice, and numbers against them; and their last—last struggle is that gasp of horror, which indicates the actual dissolution of their system. All that the people of Great Britain have to do—is not to be frightened—to stand to their own wishes—and the day will be their own.

Nations are too often appalled with terror, when on the very eve of obtaining the liberties they struggled for, without reflecting, that all convulsions are most violent when near their end. Let
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us be tranquil—yet resolute—calm and determined,
And the late machinations of a perfidious ministry
will only accelerate the effect of justice, and eman-
cipate in total the insulted inhabitants of Britain.

FINIS.



